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OPENING THE APERTURE…

ENDING SERVICE "BRANDING" OF US UNIFIED COMMANDS

by

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ABSTRACT

Opening the Aperture: Ending Service "Branding" of US Unified Commands examines command appointments to US unified commands in the context of the chosen commanders' service background. The essay's thesis is the evolving nature of military operations and the uncertainty of future warfare requires the US to break the paradigm linking particular services with certain unified command positions. It argues that despite best intents to choose the "best person" for unified commander positions, the selection process devolved into one dominated by cultural paradigms based upon history and tradition. It asserts that over time, the defense establishment runs the risk of establishing a cultural identity in the command that limits perspectives to a ground-, sea-, or air and space-centric viewpoint, thus potentially denying the command, as well as the national leadership, the benefit of a fuller range of military options. It recommends the US defense establishment formalize this evolution through a proactive program to ensure leadership of the nine unified commands is distributed among all services with a viable component in the command, explicitly delineated in Title 10, US Code, as necessary.

BIOGRAPHY

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The global military potency of the US did not occur overnight. It is a product of decades of visionary political leadership and a multitude of enormously talented military commanders. One of their legacies is the tremendous power and influence of those in charge of the nine US unified commands. Manned and equipped by the four services, these commanders set priorities, establish the conditions for success in their organizations and, when called upon, fight and win the nation's wars. This essay suggests ***the evolving nature of military operations and the uncertainty of future warfare requires the US to break the paradigm linking particular services with certain unified command positions.*** It first shows how certain services have historically dominated specific commands through a brief overview of appointment decisions over the last half century. It follows this by examining the evolving nature of warfare and the changing relevance of historical combat paradigms, then takes a brief glance at how an officer's service orientation may impact their perspective. The analysis then moves to a snapshot of each of the nine unified commands in a practical sense, the prospects for a shift in leadership selection, and general recommendations for implementation.

Historical Overview

In the spring of 2002, Secretary of Defense (SECDEF) Donald Rumsfeld referred to the next round of unified commander appointments as "the most important, far-reaching series of decisions" he would make over the next year.[1] The individuals he appoints to these positions will play a key role advising senior US political leadership, influencing the range of available military options and future service requirements. What criteria does the SECDEF use to select combatant commanders? Does a nominee's service background play a role in their qualifications to lead a particular command? The legal requirements for selection are simple and broad. Title 10, US Code, specifies only that the nominee possess a joint specialty code and have completed a full tour in a joint duty assignment as a flag officer. Even these basic requirements are subject to waiver by the President if "necessary in the national interest."[2]

The Secretary's final decision is largely subjective, based upon careful deliberations and advice from his most senior military officers. Lt Col Howard Belote's 1999 US Air Force School of Advanced Airpower Studies project outlined the broad characteristics US national leadership looked for in prospective unified commanders: (1) Military prowess, or a thorough understanding of joint operational warfare concepts; (2) Strategic prowess, or the ability to comprehend and interpret political objectives and vision; and (3) Basic senior leadership skills, including the ability to interact with senior allies in the assigned theater.[3] Simply put, this equates to a "best person" for the job selection criterion, without any apparent consideration of parent service.

Two former Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) support this "best person" view. Retired US Army General Colin Powell stated during his tenure that "all, repeat all, of the

CINC positions were offered to all of the services."[4] Retired US Army General John M.D. Shalikashvili echoed the sentiment with an assertion that "the system will break unless we pick the number one officer available. It should not be 'it's our turn.' The game starts over each time."[5] Historical data, however, belies the claim of service agnosticism inherent in the "best person" claim. The unmistakable reality is many combatant commander positions are near exclusive domains of a particular service or component. In areas where the US has anticipated major combat operations since 1947, the unified or joint force commander has historically been an Army or Marine Corps officer—seven for seven in US Central Command (CENTCOM) and 10 for 10 in Korea. In US European Command (EUCOM), 10 of 12 commanders have been from the Army. US Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) is another near clean-sweep; except for one two-month period, all 25 commanders were land warriors—23 of 25 Army. In US Pacific Command (PACOM), all 19 commanders since 1947 have been US Navy flag officers.[6]

Functional commands have also historically aligned along service lines. US Space Command (SPACECOM)—now merged with US Strategic Command (STRATCOM)—and US Transportation Command (TRANSCOM) have been US Air Force dominated. Admirals constituted 20 of 22 US Joint Forces Command (JFCOM), formerly US Atlantic Command, bosses. US Special Operations Command (SOCOM) has been exclusively Army led until its most recent commander from the Air Force, and the Air Force and Navy have shared the leadership of STRATCOM. An Air Force officer has always led North American Air Defense Command (NORAD) and an airman commands the newly formed US Northern Command (NORTHCOM) today. Regardless of the best intentions of a "best person" approach, the subtle but undeniable fact is for the majority of the US unified commands, a candidate's service background serves as an important precondition in the selection process.

A fundamental driver behind this precondition was ostensibly what US senior leadership historically perceived as the dominant form of operations anticipated in the command. The officer associated with the service that performed these operations as a core competency routinely got the nod. For example, if the national leadership perceived the dominant form of operations to be land-centric, they routinely selected a US Army or Marine Corps commander. General Powell admitted the "dominant form of operations" criterion favored strongly in his decision process. During his tenure as CJCS, if he envisaged the bulk of operations to involve ground forces, or the decisive battle was anticipated on the ground, he conceded the selection process began with a ground commander in mind.[7] In actuality, however, Department of Defense (DoD) leadership has not universally or equitably applied the "dominant operations" requisite either. Through decades of institutional inertia, the process has devolved to cultural paradigms based upon history and tradition, notwithstanding the most likely nature of *actual* ongoing or anticipated operations. PACOM is an illustrative example. Despite the reality that no major naval battle has been fought in the theater in the last 55 years—nor are any anticipated in the foreseeable future—every commander in the history of the organization has been an admiral. In another demonstration of cultural inertia, JFCOM is responsible for transformation, interoperability, joint training and experimentation, and force provision across DoD.[8] Are these activities resident exclusively within the Navy? Obviously not, but every JFCOM commander save two has been an admiral.

The truth is the unwritten policy underlying unified command appointments has historically fixed *first* upon a candidate's service, and only then upon which officer from within that service was the best person for the job. The service requisite is based upon a long and established cultural paradigm wherein unified commands "belong" to one (or at most two)

service(s). Once a command is *identified* with a particular service, the brand is difficult to remove. Changing the service identity of a single command sets a domino effect into motion in the politically charged environment of four-star billets—a "jealously guarded" asset.[9] The danger in perpetuating this institutional inertia will not manifest itself during the tenure of one SECDEF. Over time, however, the defense establishment runs the risk of establishing a cultural identity in the theater or functional command that limits the perspective to a ground-, sea-, or air and space-centric viewpoint, thus potentially denying the command, as well as the national leadership, the benefit of a fuller range of military options.

Notes

[1] Vince Crawley, "Restructuring Could Create CINC Shake-up," *Air Force Times* 62, no. 40 (29 April 2002): 24, on-line, Ebsco, 10 January 2003.

[2] *Armed Forces, US Code,* Title 10, subtitle A, part I, chapter 6, section 661 (2 January 2001).

[3] Lt Col Howard Belote, *Once in a Blue Moon: Airmen in Theater Command* (Maxwell AFB, Ala.: Air University Press, 2000), 48-49.

[4] General Colin Powell, USA, retired, transcript of email with Major Howard Belote, February 1999.

[5] Quoted in Belote, 3.

[6] Joint History Office, Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Commanders of the Unified Commands Under the Unified Command Plan,* facsimile to author, 27 November 2002.

[7] *ibid*.

[8] US Joint Forces Command, *Leading the U.S. Military Transformation,* n.p., on-line, Internet, 9 December 2002, available from http://www.jfcom.mil/about/about1.htm.

[9] Belote, 74.

The Evolving Nature Of Warfare

Have command appointment decisions kept pace with the strategic environment? Centuries of Western combat experience have perpetuated an enduring perception that the dominant form of warfare is surface-centric, relying upon the massing of large land and/or sea forces. Recent history, however, especially the last 12 years, demonstrates how the relevance of various forms of combat power can shift over time. Operation DESERT STORM represented a triumph for air and space power. It was arguably the first major successful use of operational, effects-based warfare on a theater scale, integrating stealth and precision in an unprecedented fashion. While the decade-old dispute over which component may have been decisive is plainly counterproductive, few would argue air and space power set the conditions for a rapid ground offensive to defeat what remained of the Iraqi opposition. Perhaps the more important message to take away from DESERT STORM was the risk management application of extensive US air operations, which established favorable conditions on the surface, resulting in a rapid ground phase and an extremely low number of casualties. Additionally, the advantages represented by the speed and responsiveness of air power, abundantly clear hours after the crisis began, set the conditions for success six months prior to the first bomb dropping.

Though volumes were written on DESERT STORM lessons learned, the lessons lack agreement across DoD. Inter-service debate and doctrinal development seem to indicate each service viewed DESERT STORM as a unique validation of the success of their efforts since Vietnam.[1] The airman's lessons were the efficacy of effects-based operations, the requirement for air and space superiority, and the utility of precision and stealth. Conversely, although not patently disagreeing with these issues as contributory, the Army saw DESERT STORM as a

validation of the utility of heavy surface forces engaged in maneuver warfare. A common catchphrase in the press regarded the success of air power as an "anomaly," due only to the unique nature of the desert environment, the Iraqi army and its vulnerability to US high-tech forces.[2]

The element of 1991 we may accurately label an anomaly is the scale of the conflict. Recent operations in Iraq notwithstanding, the situation in Yugoslavia over the last decade is more illustrative of what American military leadership may face for the foreseeable future—limited military application to achieve limited (and potentially vague) political objectives. Ethnic cleansing in the early 1990s prompted NATO to examine various alternatives to interrupt the violence before it spun out of control. CJCS General Powell opposed available air and sea options, due to his estimation they would not curb the bloodshed and potentially draw the US into an unacceptable protracted conflict. Among the more cynical observers, David Halberstam contends troop estimates offered by the unified commander and CJCS were reportedly set intentionally high to discourage US civilian decision makers from committing forces, since a course of action involving 100,000 to 200,000 soldiers was clearly not a politically acceptable alternative.[3] The reluctance to enter a potential quagmire prompted military action effectively amounting to inaction—the near useless "presence" of aircraft represented by Operation DENY FLIGHT.[4] When circumstances finally impelled the US to act, President Clinton chose a politically feasible and highly successful *limited* air option. More than 290 aircraft from eight NATO nations participated in the 11-day Operation DELIBERATE FORCE.[5] NATO achieved three major objectives: United Nations safe areas were no longer under attack; the Bosnian Serb Army removed heavy weapons from the brokered exclusion zone; and Sarajevo airport was

opened, allowing flow of humanitarian relief. In the words of Ambassador Robert Hunter, "…the air campaign saved NATO." [6]

Despite the success of DELIBERATE FORCE and the increasingly influential role of air and space power in the European theater, the next EUCOM commander was once again selected from the ranks of Army officers. Was General Wesley Clark the "best person" for the job in 1997, or was he the "best *US Army* person" available? In 1999, Operation ALLIED FORCE not only demonstrated further US reliance on air and space power but, more importantly, it showed how a commander's background and preconceived notions of military operations impacted operational decisions. The arbitrary three-day conflict prediction and early announcement of the US intent to avoid the introduction of ground forces were potentially devastating. These political constraints drove air- and space-exclusive courses of action, demanding a sophisticated understanding of air and space power employment at the operational and strategic levels of warfare. General Clark arguably failed to demonstrate this level of comprehension, resulting in confusion over core issues such as center of gravity determination, and sparking intense friction with his air component commander, Air Force Lieutenant General Michael Short.[7] Task Force Hawk, General Clark's counterproductive initiative to deploy Army Apache attack helicopters, introduced similar problems at the operational level. It is entirely feasible General Clark's historical, service-shaped disposition impacted not only his ability to plan and direct the employment of air and space forces, but also his ability to communicate its capabilities and limitations to senior US civilian leadership. As a result, the May 2000 appointment of General Joseph Ralston to head EUCOM may have been the first formal recognition the combatant commander selection process should evolve with the nature of warfare.

The September 11, 2001 (9/11) terrorist attacks will undoubtedly shape US defense policy for the next several decades. The immediate aftermath and subsequent military campaign in Afghanistan demonstrated an astounding example of a non-conventional military solution to a complex problem. The speed, responsiveness, and accuracy of special operations forces, along with air and space power, once again provided American policy makers a flexible option capable of achieving desired objectives with minimal collateral damage and casualties. The resultant plan was irrefutably air-centric, relying upon special operations forces as a supporting component to coordinate air attacks and enable Northern Alliance forces to take action. Despite the utility of air and space power in the initial stages of operations in Afghanistan, however, preparation for Operation ANACONDA, directed by Army General Tommy Franks and carried out by Army Major General Frank Hagenbeck, virtually excluded the air component until the final stages of the planning process.[8] Joint planning became a last-minute rush and the results were predictable—incomplete integration of air power. There is no doubt a major ground operation was entirely appropriate to the situation. The operative question, given the overwhelming success of air and space power in the weeks preceding Operation ANACONDA, was whether the combatant commander and his Joint Task Force commander were so focused on the employment of land forces in a very difficult environment that they sacrificed, perhaps subconsciously, unified action and unity of effort. Perhaps the emerging lessons of Operation ANACONDA will again demonstrate the risk of focusing on options and initiatives consistent only with a single service's perspective and stress the utility of rotating combatant command positions among all applicable services.

The evolving nature of war emerging over the past decade highlights important changes in the way US civilian leadership should look at their armed services. The shift in the way the

US employs different forms of military power does not represent a series of "anomalies," but rather portends the unpredictability of future warfare. The astounding successes of US forces in the recent Operation IRAQI FREEDOM reinforce the revolutionary changes occurring in the way the US conducts joint operations. Clearly, the nature of warfare has changed over the past decade while the manner in which we select unified commanders has not. Recent operations seem to indicate an officer's service background can significantly impact his or her perspective. Now is the time to reassess the orthodoxies underlying our traditional sources for these senior officers.

Service Culture and Its Impact On Leadership

Assuming a unified commander must be a joint-minded officer who understands the evolving nature of warfare, does the uniform he or she wears matter? The answer revolves around whether one believes a powerful service acculturation process exists in the US military that conditions the operational or strategic leader's perspective. Does an airman, for example, see a problem through a different lens purely due to his or her organizational upbringing? Were decisions made during Operations ALLIED FORCE and ENDURING FREEDOM influenced by the background of the Army commanders involved? It is a logical supposition that lenses exist and *do* cause officers from different services to see things from different vantage points. All military services emphasize skill and proficiency in core competencies for at least the first decade of an officer's career, and usually much longer. The service-centric imprint developed during an officer's crucial formative years is an indispensable element to US military success. Expertise in one's career specialty is not something we want to eradicate as part of a senior officer's professional development. It does, however, come at a cost. A focus on expertise

within one's service, or in many cases their branch or specialty, is bound to affect their aggregate operational perspective—it *will* influence the way a commander thinks.

A 1998 Naval Postgraduate School analysis of contemporary literature on organizational culture and its application to military organizations concluded that service culture, while not the sole determinant of a decision maker's attitude toward a scenario, does have a significant behavioral impact. Specifically, the study's historical data indicated one's national or service culture "influences the decision makers' ability to understand the range of options and to perceive which are more viable."[9] This cultural inertia certainly influenced Army leadership during the US Civil War, when they clung to outdated tactics despite abundant empirical evidence indicating the error of their ways.[10] Similarly, French military leaders failed to alter their doctrine between the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 and World War I.[11] Today's military officers are equally susceptible to cultural bias. In 1990, Colin Gray argued the services' "mutual comprehension" of even each others' operating environments left much to be desired.[12] He made the case that soldiers, sailors, and airmen interpret situations in a fundamentally different manner based on their diverse operating media. A recent Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) study concluded these cultural fault lines still existed a decade later, often producing unproductive rivalries for resources and missions.[13]

Today, a legitimate question would be how significantly joint experience dilutes one's service-based cultural bias. The Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 stemmed from several incidents that questioned the military's joint warfighting efficacy. Among other stipulations, this legislation mandated joint education and experience for officers to achieve flag/general officer rank. One of its desired outcomes was a stronger joint perspective and a resultant weakening of the officer's service bias.

Despite the act's best intentions, joint education and experience has not been a cure-all for service bias. A 1995 survey of Air War College students tested the effectiveness of the legislation's measures in reducing cultural barriers to inter-service collaboration. The survey's outcome, from comparing officers with joint education and experience to those without it, was counterintuitive. Those with joint experience indicated a *stronger* attachment to "primary ideological artifacts of [their] parent service"—namely Air Force doctrine and concepts than those lacking joint education and assignment(s).[14] The trend was even more pronounced among rated officers, who are more likely than their non-rated peers to reach senior leadership positions in unified commands, at least for the foreseeable future. This affirmation of service cultural bias in no way denigrates the value of joint experience for senior military leaders—real-world experience indicates joint exposure is absolutely essential to a senior officer's abilities. It does, however, support the position that senior leaders are strongly influenced by their background, and joint professional military education and joint assignments not only fail to eliminate the bias, they may exacerbate them.

Immersion in a distinct culture is not bad—service independence and competition are important factors in the remarkable success of the US military. CSIS analysts concluded a degree of service competition regarding doctrine, training, and acquisition can be healthy.[15] Senior military officers must simply understand the influence of these cultural screening mechanisms upon their perceptions and solutions to problems. Those who have worked on unified command staffs know all too well the strong influence the commander has on the culture of the staff and the command in general. It is not unusual for the command to reflect the service culture of its boss. Strategic military leaders and their staffs must be able to analyze complex problems and deliver feasible options for the national leadership. Senior leaders do not "shed"

their service "skin" when they pin on four stars—throughout their careers, they are promoted within their services for demonstrating the attributes of a great airman, soldier, sailor, or marine and there is nothing wrong with that. Accepting that this service bias exists and that it has an impact even on the most senior decision makers is an important step in understanding the value of avoiding single service domination of combatant commands.

Notes

[1] Maj Gen David Deptula, Air Combat Command, interviewed by author at Air War College, Maxwell AFB, Ala., 12 December 2002.

[2] For a discussion of the context of the "anomaly" debate regarding airpower, see Rebecca Grant, "Nine Myths About Kosovo," *Air Force* 83, no. 6 (June 2000): 50-55.

[3] David Halberstam, *War in a Time of Peace: Bush, Clinton, and the Generals* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001), 38.

[4] Benjamin S. Lambeth, *The Transformation of American Airpower* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2000), 178-179.

[5] *ibid*, 176.

[6] *Air Power and Diplomacy in Bosnia, 1992-1995*, CD-ROM (Anaheim, Calif: IRIS Independent Research, 1999).

[7] For descriptions of the command friction and its impact on ALLIED FORCE, see Lambeth, 207-213 and Lt Gen Michael C. Short, USAF, retired, address to the Air Force Association National Symposium, Washington, D.C., 25 February 2000, on-line, Internet, 23 February 2003, available from http://www.aef.org/pub/short200.asp

[8] Deptula interview.

[9] Peter D. Haynes, *Military Services' Cultures, and Military Strategy* (Monterey, Calif.: Naval Postgraduate School, 1998), 6.

[10] Weigley, 95-97.

[11] David Lyons Booker, "Cultural Conditioning and Ideology in Public Organizations: The Case of the Air Force" (PhD diss., University of Alabama Graduate School, 1995), 117.

[12] Colin S. Gray, *War, Peace and Victory: Strategy and Statecraft for the Next Century* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), 62-63.

[13] Edwin Dorn, et al., *American Military Culture in the Twenty-First Century* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies Press, 2000), 9-13, 80-81.

[14] Booker, 116-117.

[15] Dorn et al, 73.

Leadership in Today's Unified Commands

Regional Unified Commands

US Northern Command. NORTHCOM offers perhaps the most vivid example of an opportunity to serve the nation through an evolving leadership perspective. In October 2002, the US established NORTHCOM to place a unified commander in charge of a geographic area of responsibility (AOR) encompassing all of North America and its adjacent coastal regions.[1] The Commander, USNORTHCOM (COMNORTH) also currently serves as Commander, North American Air Defense Command (COMNORAD). Every commander since NORAD's inception has been an Air Force airman. The US has treasured air defense of the homeland since well before signing the first NORAD agreement in 1958 and continues to value its political benefits through alliance with Canada.[2] However, the US must be cautious not to allow tradition and politics to negatively affect appropriate execution of NORTHCOM's mission. The merger of SPACECOM into STRATCOM removed the substantial responsibilities of warfighter space support from COMNORTH's agenda. The challenges of controlling air, land, and sea access to the continent further weakens any justification that airmen lead the command exclusively. The option of a non-Air Force officer commanding NORTHCOM now warrants serious consideration.

An Army officer might be particularly qualified to lead NORTHCOM in its complex mission of controlling continental security. The Army's historical experience as DoD executive agent for Military Support to Civil Authorities makes some of their senior officers uniquely qualified for the daunting task of integration with non-military agencies.[3] Additionally, the

consequence management responsibilities of NORTHCOM's Joint Task Force-Civil Support are distinctly Army areas of competency, particularly regarding weapons of mass destruction. Alternatively, much of the nation's security challenges are distinctly maritime in nature. As NORTHCOM's AOR extends 500 miles offshore, coastal access and control issues are among the most difficult and least understood challenges confronting the commander. The Navy and Coast Guard routinely patrol 95,000 miles of coastal and inland shoreline to deter or intercept homeland security threats.[4] The US coastline is clearly among the most lucrative points of approach to the continent for any low-tech adversary. Only about two percent of cargo containers are searched prior to entering the nation's 361 ports.[5] A Navy officer would be uniquely qualified to transform NORTHCOM's efforts in these areas. Independent of NORAD politics, there is clearly no longer a compelling need for an Air Force officer to command NORTHCOM.

US Pacific Command. PACOM, the oldest US unified command, stands in contrast to NORTHCOM's youth. It represents the prime example of institutional inertia in the form of single service domination of its leadership. It is difficult to fathom how, if all unified command positions are open to all services, a Navy officer could *always* be the best person for the job—19 of 19 times since 1947. Is the nature of the theater and potential character of conflict in PACOM so maritime as to justify continuance of this trend? While there has not been a major naval battle in PACOM's AOR since the end of World War II, there have been major land- and air-centric wars in Korea and Vietnam. The Navy is admittedly very involved in planning Marine expeditionary operations and projection of air power ashore in the theater, but these facts seemingly support the utility of Marine Corps or Air Force leadership, with the Navy in a

supporting role. The largest major combat operation planned for in PACOM is on the Korean peninsula—clearly an air- and land-dominated campaign.

The traditional argument that most of the Pacific theater is covered with water is archaic and counterproductive. The counter-arguments that the *entirety* of the theater (indeed the earth) is encompassed in air and space, and all of the major populations reside on land, weaken the maritime medium justification. The only feasible argument for continuing the paradigm of exclusive naval command of PACOM is political—it has always been a naval theater and a coveted four-star billet the Navy most likely defends vigorously. Politics aside, future US military dominance in the Pacific theater will include extensive use of responsive air, space, and land forces. US national interests in the long term are best served by ensuring we examine PACOM's issues from all perspectives. Rotating leadership of the command across the services will help achieve this goal.

US Central Command. The theater of operations comprising CENTCOM's AOR is one in which the US has extensive recent experience. Air and maritime operations dominated virtually all of that experience from DESERT STORM until the outset of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM. Air Force and Navy aircraft flew thousands of sorties annually in pursuit of US and coalition political objectives during Operation SOUTHERN WATCH. Naval superiority constitutes an important but seldom recognized feature of the CENTCOM Commander's (COMCENT) regional posture. Preservation of "the free flow of energy resources, access to regional states and freedom of navigation," fundamentally maritime functions, are included among the highest operational priorities in COMCENT's posture statement.[6] The strategic importance of the Strait of Hormuz and the Suez Canal in peacetime and all levels of conflict should not be understated.

Despite the daily theater influence of the naval and air components, an Army or Marine Corps officer has commanded CENTCOM since its inception in 1983. Part of the justification for this trend may be the paradigm among many senior officers that leading major campaigns involving ground forces is exceedingly more complex than leading air or naval forces. Retired General Chuck Horner, contends the typical soldier is in "terror" of being led into battle by an airman.[7] Horner was clearly a potential candidate to assume command of CENTCOM following General Schwarzkopf, but CJCS General Powell recommended General Joseph Hoar, a Marine. In explaining his selection, Powell acknowledged the complexity of air operations, but felt "the integration of allied ground forces and the ground battle plan was, in [his] view, a more demanding political, diplomatic and military task than the air war."[8] Interestingly, airmen have been something of a victim of their own effectiveness in this regard. In Powell's words, it is "easier for an Army CINC to subcontract out the air piece than for airman to subcontract out the ground piece."[9]

The implication that airmen are less qualified than their Army or Marine counterparts to understand integration of the land battle introduces a similar concern regarding the qualifications of a ground commander to comprehend the nature of air and space power. A large number of non-airman senior officers continue to have a fundamental misunderstanding of how air and space power should be employed in a campaign. The near-disastrous initial execution of Operation ANACONDA in Afghanistan is illustrative of the barriers remaining to effective integration. Air was again envisioned as the "simple" piece and air planners were virtually excluded from initial planning for the operation. In a battle where air eventually played a major part in saving the lives of the soldiers and airmen on the ground, just three lines of a 145-page operations order were initially devoted to air operations.[10] The perpetuation of an attitude that

the only effective air power is close air support, requiring little advanced planning, demonstrates "subcontracting the air piece" is an inappropriate way of envisioning the campaign. If the contention that airmen lack an understanding of land force employment is true, than surely land component officers also require a more refined understanding of the remarkably complex employment of air and space power.

The debate among DoD officials preceding Operation IRAQI FREEDOM clearly demonstrated how cultural predisposition influences the decision process. Differences over whether or not large numbers of ground forces would represent the campaign centerpiece reportedly put General Tommy Franks at odds with some administration and Pentagon officials who envisioned a more "air-centric" operation, with reduced numbers of land forces.[11] Clearly, the ultimate success of the campaign hinged upon the synergy evident in effective joint planning and execution. Rotating leadership of this command among all services would continue to broaden the range of combat options available to national leadership in an area likely to be of interest to the US for the foreseeable future.

US Southern Command. The commander of SOUTHCOM deals with a unique range of issues in a theater that has witnessed continual upheaval. In the last 40 years, the majority of national governments in Latin America shifted from fundamentally civilian rule to a dominance of military regimes and back to mostly civilian governance. The professionals serving in SOUTHCOM, formerly Caribbean Command (CARIBCOM) until 1963, are charged with shaping the environment in a region fraught with political disillusionment, uncertainty and economic woes. [12] Unlike other regions, SOUTHCOM has no major theater war on the horizon and spends the bulk of its efforts managing security cooperation initiatives and counter drug operations.

With two Marine Corps exceptions, every commander of SOUTHCOM and CARIBCOM since 1947 has been an Army officer.[13] Most had career and/or cultural ties to the region. The reality that the preponderance of indigenous military forces in the region is land-centric only reinforces the historical dominance of Army theater leadership. On the other hand, air and naval operations are clearly important to SOUTHCOM, and leadership by officers from these services possessing extensive knowledge and experience in Latin America could potentially enhance local military development and exploitation of all media. What stands out even more prominently, however, is the prevalence and utility of non-conventional military practices—closely paralleling the core competencies of special operations forces (SOF)—in SOUTHCOM. A great deal of the activities surrounding SOUTHCOM's extensive counter-drug, disaster relief, humanitarian and civic assistance missions are the bread and butter of SOF.[14] The nature of SOUTHCOM's theater security relationships and dominant activities warrant reexamination of this paradigm. Career special operators—from all services—may represent superb candidates to command SOUTHCOM.

US European Command. Recent command appointments in EUCOM may signify an important turning point in diversity among unified commanders and serve as a model for future appointments in other commands. The selection of General Joseph Ralston as commander in May 2000 represented the first non-Army commander in that theater in nearly 40 years. His experience in air and space power requirements management made him particularly qualified to lead NATO's Defense Capabilities Initiative, ensuring the upgrade and compatibility of allied air, missile defense and command and control systems.[15] William Taylor, Director of Political-Military Studies at CSIS, refuted naysayers to General Ralston's appointment stating, "Some

would argue that you need someone who understands how far behind the allies are in air power—someone who can press them to modernize."[16]

Since General James Jones, former Commandant of the Marine Corps, assumed command of EUCOM in February 2003, the theater should benefit from an even broader perspective. General Jones' experiences growing up in Europe for 15 years give him a unique, distinctly European, outlook on theater issues. As Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz articulated, he was selected "because he's Jim Jones, not because he wore a particular uniform" and because he has "distinguished himself for his ability to think jointly."[17] Surely, Jones' appointment does not declare Marine Corps forces will comprise the bulk of any warfighting capacity in the theater, or imply amphibious operations will be the dominant form of warfare in the next conflict in EUCOM. It does, however, strongly reinforce Secretary Rumsfeld's commitment to the "best person" approach to unified commander selection, and introduces optimism the US may be moving positively in the direction of breaking single-service domination of all combatant command leadership.

Functional Unified Commands

One of the enduring harmonizing features to offset service particularism in the regional command structure is appointment of a preponderance of Air Force and Navy officers to lead US functional unified commands. One possible exception is SOCOM, traditionally commanded by Army officers, but now led by an Air Force officer. Air Force or Navy four-stars habitually lead all of the other functional commands. Although this may be a useful counterbalance when negotiating the exceedingly sensitive issue of four-star billets, it perpetuates an enduring paradigm of sea, air, and space power in a supporting role. Is the argument for more robust rotation of command positions as applicable here as it is for the regional commands? The

answer is clearly yes—a policy of revolving command appointments among those services possessing components in the applicable functional commands is a healthy way to ensure we examine specific functional issues from all perspectives over time.

US Special Operations Command. The recent appointment of Air Force General Charles Holland to command SOCOM provides a vivid example of how transformational thought can extend beyond technology to organizational leadership. SOF, formerly associated mainly with land-based missions, has achieved much greater exposure since their visible successes directing air strikes in Operation ENDURING FREEDOM. Nearly 12,000 of the over 46,000 special operators are airmen.[18] ENDURING FREEDOM showed the American public what SOF warriors already knew—special operations are inherently joint, with air, space, sea, and land forces all playing an integral role. The appointment of an officer from a service other than the Army is an encouraging step in ensuring SOCOM continues to be at the leading edge of transformational, force-multiplying warfighting effects.

US Transportation Command. TRANSCOM, commanded by an Air Force officer since its inception in 1987, could benefit from a similar train of thought. Airlift is crucial in providing rapid, flexible mobility for US and allied forces but doesn't come close to performing the mission on its own. Sealift assets moved over 90% of the material supporting Operations DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM.[19] The Army's role in the movement of cargo is admittedly shrinking with recent cutbacks in Military Traffic Management Command, but they remain the biggest consumers of lift in any major joint campaign. The Army will continue to consume the majority of strategic lift for the foreseeable future and arguably understands air and sealift requirements better than any component. TRANSCOM should not be considered the Air Force's Air Mobility Command with a purple cover just because the Air Force's component

commander happens to be a four-star. Rotational appointment of commanders from other services would help ensure TRANSCOM benefits from a fuller range of leadership perspectives.

US Joint Forces Command. As the designated US military "transformation laboratory," JFCOM has a unique and daunting responsibility in DoD.[20] Navy admirals principally commanded Atlantic Command, which evolved into JFCOM, since 1947, due mainly to the overwhelmingly maritime nature of the theater and dual-hat command relationship as Supreme Allied Commander, Atlantic. With the inception of NORTHCOM, JFCOM no longer has a geographic AOR and now focuses exclusively on transformation, interoperability, joint training and experimentation, and force provision across DoD.[21] It is essential for JFCOM to foster an environment encouraging innovative concepts. While it is not the author's place to assess the qualifications of any combatant command incumbent, it is interesting to note the current JFCOM Commander is an admiral, thus perpetuating the maritime flavor of the command.[22] It is absolutely essential to transformation within DoD that the SECDEF ensure future appointments to command JFCOM span the spectrum of service perspectives and do not remain trapped in tradition.

US Strategic Command. STRATCOM is an interesting case study for future command appointments. Since its inception as a unified command in 1992, leadership has rotated between Air Force and Navy officers, whose services comprise the two major STRATCOM components. The recent fusion with the former US Space Command may prompt SECDEF to consider Air Force officers more favorably for this position, due to that service's primacy in space. The bulk of operational military space support is provided by the Air Force, which has a four-star component commander. Additionally, in a recent reorganization within DoD making the Air Force the executive agent for space, Under Secretary of the Air Force Peter B. Teets was tasked

with managing military space capabilities, including all-service development and acquisition.[23] Applying the logic described earlier regarding TRANSCOM, this does not necessarily imply only Air Force officers should command STRATCOM. All three services with STRATCOM components represent users of the commands assets and products. Rotating leadership of this command among the services will ensure all service requirements are met and represent an effective counterbalance to potential institutional Air Force domination of STRATCOM.

Notes

[1] US Northern Command, *Who We Are: Mission Statement*, n.p., on-line, Internet, 9 December 2002, available from http://www.northcom.mil.

[2] Chris Champion, "NORAD in the Balance," *National Defense* 29, no. 11 (27 May 2002): 15, on-line, Ebsco, 25 January 2003.

[3] DOD Directive (DODD) 3025.1, *Military Support to Civil Authorities*, 15 January 1993, 13-14.

[4] Patricia Kime, "Homeland Defense Continues to be Mission Priority," *Navy Times* 51, no. 51 (23 September 2002): 34.

[5] Marty Kauchak, "'B' For Effort, 'C' For Accomplishment," *Armed Forces Journal International* 140, no. 4 (November 2002): 8.

[6] US Central Command, *Commander's Strategy*, on-line, Internet, 9 December 2002, available from http://www.centcom.mil/Aboutus/cinc_strategy.htm.

[7] General Charles Horner, US Air Force, retired, transcript of email with Major Howard Belote, 4 February 1999.

[8] Powell email.

[9] *ibid*.

[10] Deptula interview.

[11] Rowan Scarborough, "Size of Force on Ground Key in Plan for Iraq War," *Washington Times*, 26 April 2002, n.p., on-line, Internet, 23 January 2002, available from http:/www.washtimes. com/national/20020426-41274916.htm.

[12] Alfred A. Valenzuela, "US Army South: The Component of Choice in US Southern Command's AOR," *Army* 52, no. 10 (October 2002): 209, on-line, ProQuest, 18 January 2003.

[13] Excludes a 38 day period in 1958 when SOUTHCOM was commanded by a USAF Major General.

[14] US Southern Command, *Theater Strategy*, on-line, Internet, 21 January 2003, available from http://www.southcom.mil/pa/Facts/Strategy.htm.

[15] Statement of General Joseph W. Ralston, USAF, Commander, US European Command, in House, *Hearing before the US House of Representatives, Armed Services Committee*, 107th Cong., 3d sess., 2002, on-line, Internet, 10 February 2003, available from http://armedservices. house.gov/ openingstatementsandpressreleases/107thcongress/02-03-20ralston.html.

[16] William Matthews, "More Regional CINC Jobs Could go to Air Force," *Air Force Times* 60, no. 5 (6 September 1999): 16.

[17] Linda D. Kozaryn, "Gen James Jones Becomes First Marine EUCOM Commander; SACEUR Title to Follow," *Defense Link*, 16 January 2003, n.p., on-line, Internet, 21 January 2003, available from http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Jan2003/n01162003_200301169.html.

[18] Vince Crawley, "Command Shuffle Illustrates the Importance of Cooperation," *Air Force Times* 61, no. 3 (14 August 2000): 8.

[19] Admiral Frank B. Kelso, III, Chief of Naval Operations, *The United States Navy in DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM: Summary Report* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Navy, 1991), 63.

[20] US Joint Forces Command.

[21] These missions were already assigned in the 1999 Unified Command Plan while JFCOM still had geographic responsibilities and retained following the October 2002 reorganization.

Notes

[22] The current JFCOM commander has a broad background in sub-surface warfare and experience with the Central Intelligence Agency; for biographical information, see "Admiral E. P. Giambastiani," biography, on-line, Internet, 9 December 2002, available from http://www.jfcom.mil/about/giambastiani.htm.

[23] Ann Roosevelt, "Air Force Streamlines Space Management Activities," *Space and Missile Defense Report* 3, no. 4 (14 February 2002): 1-3.

Recommendation and Conclusions

This paper has shown that informal assignment of command leadership to particular services or service pairs is a historical reality. Tremendous leaders made rational command recommendations and the nation has witnessed decades of immensely talented unified commanders. However, the process by which many of these officers reached high command was hardly rational, and perpetuating this approach may constipate US strategic options for a wildly uncertain future. Therefore, ***the US defense establishment must establish a proactive program to ensure leadership of the nine unified commands is distributed among all services with a viable component in the command.*** This mandate could be explicitly delineated in Title 10, US Code, as necessary. Recent command appointments in EUCOM and SOCOM are a positive sign the pendulum may be swinging in the proper direction. The SECDEF should now make it abundantly clear the days of service particularism in combatant commands are over. Clearly, timing and availability of qualified officers from a particular service precludes establishing a firm schedule and the SECDEF remains obligated to choose the best available officer for the position on a case-by-case basis.

Decisions on who is the "best person" to lead a unified command have important implications. The President, SECDEF, and CJCS take them very seriously. Of the nine unified commanders, three are Air Force officers, three Navy, two Army and one Marine Corps.[1] The problem is not service equity in raw numerical terms, but the distribution of these appointments among the services. Command appointments have evolved into the political "branding" of unified commands with a particular service (or at best two-service) label. Once applied, these service brands become an *ownership* issue that is difficult to challenge. The principal danger

associated with this institutional inertia is the potential for sub-optimization of the range of strategic choices and advice provided to US political leadership in the long term.

The US accepts unavoidable redundancies and tremendous inefficiencies from operating with a four-service defense establishment. One of the benefits of the system is the variety of perspectives offered by professionals from different services, due to their unique cultures. Even though unified commanders represent the interests of their command—not their service—to the President, their respective service culture inevitably colors their views and, consequently, their theater strategies. Regular unified command rotation among the services will aid in determining whether it is in the nation's best interest to fundamentally alter the "dominant form of operations" in a theater, the manner in which we exploit a particular medium, or the tools and techniques employed by the military in pursuit of the nation's interests.

Notes

[1] These numbers do not include Combined Forces Command Korea, currently commanded by a US Army officer and delegated primary warfighting responsibilities on the Korean peninsula.